



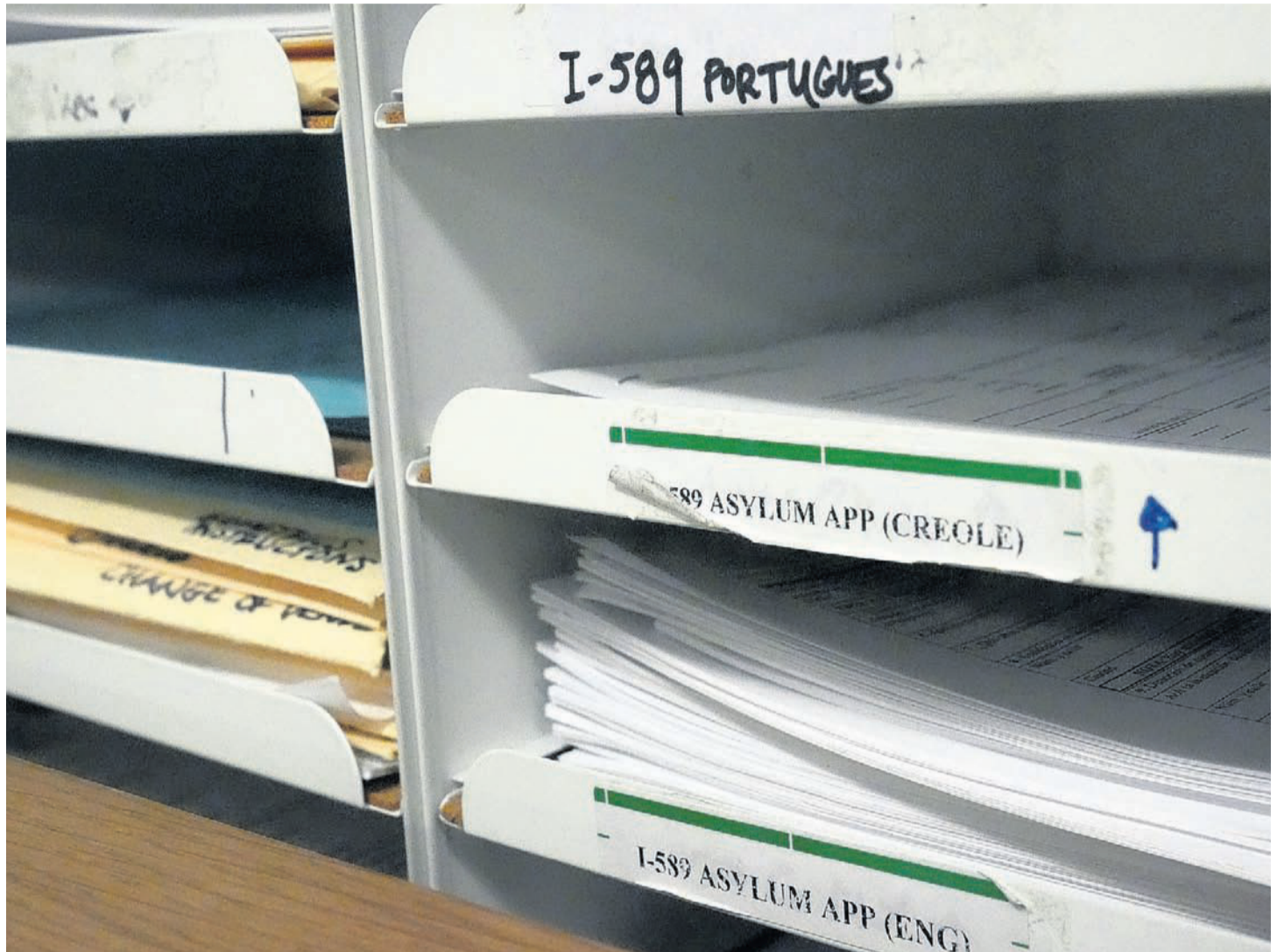
Aruba's ONLY English newspaper

Fueled by unprecedented border crossings, a record 3 million cases clog U.S. immigration courts

By GIOVANNA DELL'ORTO
Associated Press

MIAMI (AP) — Eight months after crossing the Rio Grande into the United States, a couple in their 20s sat in an immigration court in Miami with their three young children. Through an interpreter, they asked a judge to give them more time to find an attorney to file for asylum and not be deported back to Honduras, where gangs threatened them.

Judge Christina Martyak agreed to a three-month extension, referred Aarón Rodríguez and Cindy Baneza to free legal aid provided by the Catholic Archdiocese of Miami in the same courthouse — and their case remains one of the unprecedented 3 million currently pending in immigration courts around the United States. Fueled by record-breaking increases in migrants who seek asylum after being apprehended for crossing the border illegally, the court backlog has grown by more than 1 million over the last fiscal year and it's now triple what it was in 2019, according to government data compiled by Syracuse University's Transactional Records Access Clearinghouse.



Asylum applications in different languages are shown, Wednesday, Jan. 10, 2024, in a room used by Catholic Legal Services for the Archdiocese of Miami to help asylum-seekers at an immigration court in Miami.

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Associated Press
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CARNAVAL ENTERTAINMENT ON TUESDAYS

7PM
Steelpan

8PM
Carnaval Show

8:30PM
Carnaval themed watershow

Paseo Herencia

Shopping, Dining & Entertainment Center

Located in Palm Beach high rise area, across the Holiday Inn Hotel

Fueled by unprecedented border crossings, a record 3 million cases clog U.S. immigration courts

Continued from Front

Judges, attorneys and migrant advocates worry that's rendering an already strained system unworkable, as it often takes several years to grant asylum-seekers a new stable life and to deport those with no right to remain in the country.

"Sometimes hope already sinks," said Mayra Cruz after her case was also granted an extension by Martyak because the Peruvian migrant doesn't have an attorney.

"But here I've felt a bit safer," added Cruz, who said she had to flee with only the clothes on her back with her partner and their children after repeated threats from gangs. About 261,000 cases of migrants placed in removal proceedings are pending in the Miami court — the largest docket in the country. That's about the same as were pending nationwide a dozen years ago, said Syracuse University professor Austin Kocher.

The backlog includes migrants who have been in the United States for decades and were apprehended on unrelated charges, but most are new asylum seekers who declare a fear of persecution if they are sent back, he added.

Backlogged courts, administered by the Justice Department, often get little attention in immigration debates, including in current Senate negotiations over the Biden administration's \$110 billion proposal that links aid for Ukraine and Israel to asylum and other border policy changes.

When migrants are apprehended by U.S. authorities at the border, many are released with a record of their detention and instructions to appear in court in the city where they are headed. That information is passed on from the Department of Homeland Security to the Justice Department, whose Executive Office for Immigration Review runs the courts, so that an initial hearing can be scheduled. "They're just being released without any idea of what comes next," said Randy



An officer listens to a question as he directs people to a courtroom, Wednesday, Jan. 10, 2024, in an immigration court in Miami.

Associated Press

McGrorty, executive director of Catholic Legal Services for the Archdiocese of Miami, which has seen hundreds of thousands of migrants join its diaspora communities.

So many migrants go to them for advice that, in the last couple of years, they've largely switched to teaching how to self-petition and represent themselves before judges.

"We help them understand what judges want, and we help judges with efficiency and preserving fundamental rights," said Miguel Mora, a Catholic Legal Services supervising attorney in Miami. Advocates say that most migrants ask for individual legal representation, something that's becoming increasingly rare given the huge numbers, and how to get work permits, which migrants can apply for 150 days after filing their asylum application.

It's a vicious cycle — without regular work, most can't afford even a low-cost lawyer, so their cases can take even longer.

"We don't have the money," Rodríguez, 23, told Judge Martyak, who had already granted him an extension for having no attorney at a previous hearing, as his partner rocked the stroller where their

U.S.-born baby slept. They fled Honduras after the gang that had killed the father of Baneza's oldest child threatened further violence unless they started paying from the meager profits of their tortilla shop.

"We were left with no other option than get out of the country," Rodríguez told The Associated Press. "We've already had three court appearances. Time is helping. We're getting a little bit oriented."

But the slow-moving process also means it takes years for asylum-seekers to be able to reunite with families they left behind and integrate fully in American society, said Karen Musalo, an attorney and professor who leads the Center for Gender & Refugee Studies at the University of California in San Francisco.

Time also doesn't help with the backlog, even though government records show judges completed far more cases in the last year than ever before, because their dockets keep growing so fast. Their average caseload is now 5,000 per judge, said Mimi Tsankov, president of the National Association of Immigration Judges.

She cited estimates that doubling the current number of

judges to about 1,400 might solve the current backlog by 2032. In the new budget request, the Executive Office for Immigration Review is requesting funds from Congress to hire 150 new judges and support staff, said its press secretary, Kathryn Mattingly. Experts like retired judge Paul Schmidt, who also served as government immigration counsel while the last major reform was enacted nearly forty years ago, say the broken system can only be fixed with major policy changes. An example would be allowing most asylum cases to be solved administratively or through streamlined processes instead of litigated in courts.

"The situation has gotten progressively worse since the Obama administration, when it really started getting out of hand," said Schmidt, who in 2016, his last year on the bench, was scheduling cases seven years out.

In the mid-2010s, families and children from Central America seeking asylum became the majority of illegal crossers at the U.S. southern border. In response, the Obama administration as well as the Trump and Biden administrations started prioritizing some categories of cases

they want solved faster to reflect enforcement priorities. But courts are ineffective deterrents to people desperate to flee their countries, and judges say shuffling cases around only adds to the chaos as they wade through dozens if not hundreds of cases a day.

At the courthouse in Miami last week, one judge went looking for a Haitian family who hadn't shown up, then granted an order of deportation in absentia, just as she had for a Colombian family who also failed to appear at their hearing immediately before.

Another judge found that a Cuban mother, then a Venezuelan man had applied for other forms of protection special to their countries and dismissed their cases, telling them they were done with the court. The woman broke into grateful tears. The man, who had come more than 200 miles for the minutes-long hearing, mumbled "God bless you" in Spanish.

And a steady stream of migrants went to find Catholic Legal Services — one couple directed there by the judge to figure out how to present in court their video of the gang murder that had forced them to flee. □

MLK Jr. holiday celebrations include acts of service and parades, but some take a political turn

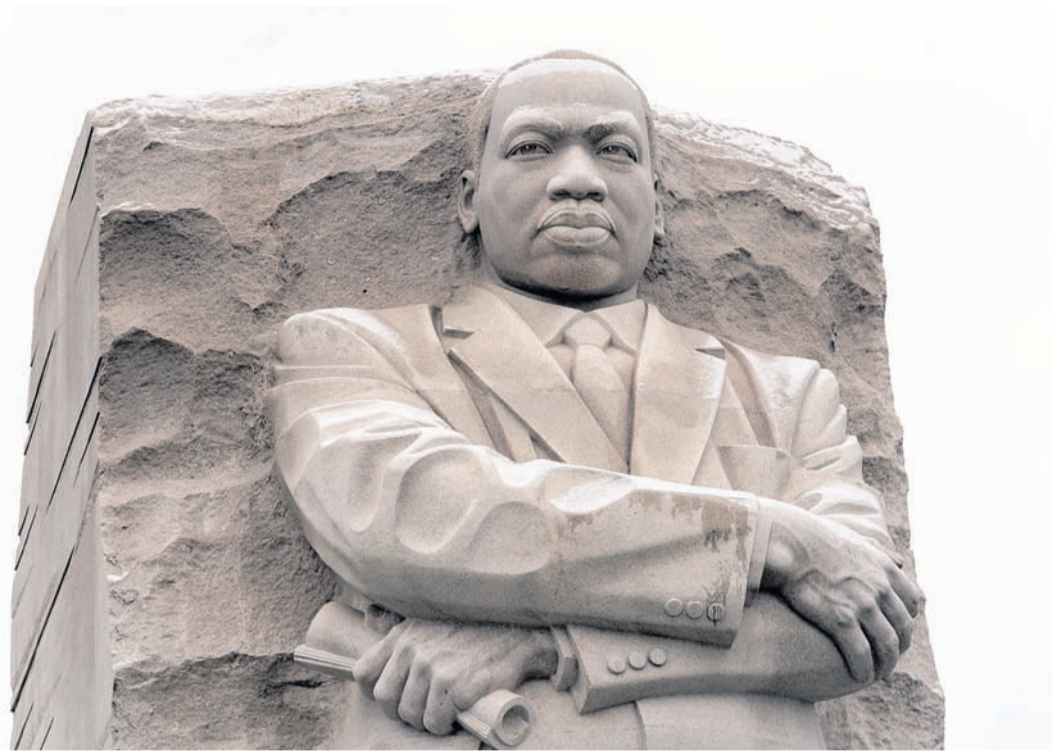
By JEFF MARTIN and JEFFREY COLLINS

Associated Press

ATLANTA (AP) — Communities across the nation celebrated the Martin Luther King Jr. holiday on Monday with acts of service, prayer services and parades. But with the November presidential election as a backdrop, some events took on an overtly political turn.

In King's hometown of Atlanta, several speakers at the 56th annual commemorative service for King at historic Ebenezer Baptist Church, where King served as pastor, touched on the divisive partisan climate in the United States.

Former U.S. Rep. Liz Cheney, who served on the House committee that investigated the Jan. 6, 2021 insurrection at the Capitol, had harsh words for Trump, whom she did not mention by name. On that day, Trump's supporters tried to block Congress from counting the Electoral College votes that would affirm Joe Biden's victory in the 2020 presidential race. "A former president refuses to acknowledge that he lost, and he has convinced millions that our elections



The Martin Luther King Jr. Memorial is seen during the annual Martin Luther King, Jr. Wreath Laying Ceremony in Washington, Monday, Jan. 15, 2024.

and our democracy no longer work," she said. "He threatens the foundations of our nation and everything Dr. King persevered to save."

She also criticized some religious leaders in the way they seemed to worship Trump, not God.

U.S. Sen. Raphael Warnock, the longtime senior pastor of Ebenezer, told the audi-

ence, "You better stand up and vote!" to rousing applause. "If your vote didn't count, why are folks trying so hard to keep you from voting? Stand and use your voice. Stand up and use your vote. Speak up!"

Bernice King, the daughter of the late civil rights leader, warned that "our humanity is literally under attack." But she noted that her father's

legacy of nonviolence taught the world that "we can defeat injustice, ignorance and hold people accountable at the same time without seeking to destroy, diminish, demean or cancel them."

Speaking at the MLK Day at the Dome rally at the South Carolina Statehouse, Vice President Kamala Harris said young people two or

three generations removed from King have seen their freedoms shrink from laws restricting voting to bans on abortions and the ever-present threat of gun violence, especially in schools. "They even try to erase, overlook and rewrite the ugly parts of our past. For example, the Civil War which must I really have to say was about slavery?" Harris said.

Harris also used her speech at the event which started in 2000 to pressure the state to remove the Confederate flag from atop the Capitol dome to urge the younger generation to regain those rights lost through voting and action.

"Generation after generation on the fields of Gettysburg, in the schools of Little Rock, on the grounds of this Statehouse, on the streets of Ferguson and on the floor of the Tennessee House of Representatives we the people have always fought to make the promise of freedom real," Harris said.

In Philadelphia, President Joe Biden marked the holiday by volunteering at Philabundance, a nonprofit food bank. □

Associated Press

Austin is released from hospital after complications from prostate cancer surgery he kept secret

By LOLITA C. BALDOR and TARA COPP

Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin was released from the hospital on Monday, after spending two weeks there to treat complications from surgery for prostate cancer he kept secret from senior Biden administration leaders and staff for weeks.

Austin will be working from home as he recovers, and his doctors said he "progressed well throughout his stay and his strength is rebounding." They said in a statement the cancer was treated early and his prognosis is "excellent."

In a statement, Austin expressed thanks to the medical staff and said that "as

I continue to recuperate and perform my duties from home, I'm eager to

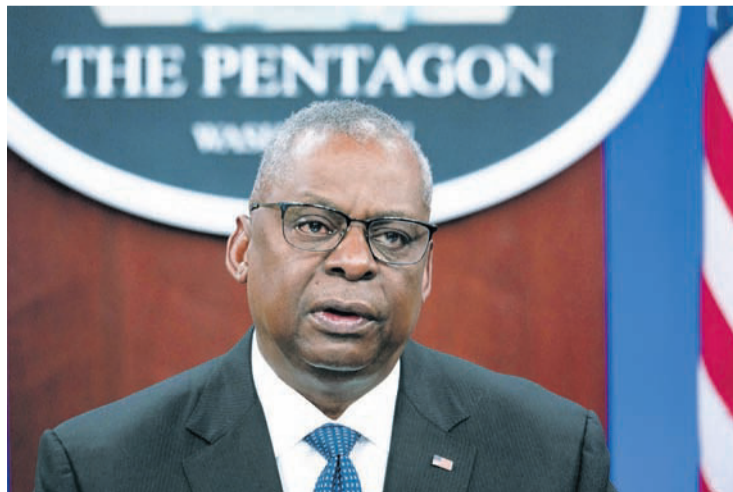
fully recover and return as quickly as possible to the Pentagon."

Austin, 70, was admitted to Walter Reed National Military Medical Center on Dec. 22 and underwent surgery to treat the cancer, which was detected earlier in the month during a routine screening. He developed an infection a week later and was hospitalized Jan. 1 and admitted to intensive care.

Dr. John Maddox, the trauma medical director, and Dr. Gregory Chesnut, the director of the Center for Prostate Disease Research at Walter Reed, said that during Austin's hospitaliza-

tion he underwent medical tests and was treated for lingering leg pain. They said he has physical therapy to do but there are no plans for further cancer treatment other than regular checks.

President Joe Biden and senior administration officials were not told about Austin's hospitalization until Jan. 4, and Austin kept the cancer diagnosis secret until Jan. 9. Biden has said Austin's failure to tell him about the hospitalization was a lapse in judgment, but the Democratic president insists he still has confidence in his Pentagon chief. □



Secretary of Defense Lloyd Austin speaks at a virtual Ukraine Defense Contact Group (UDCG) meeting, Nov. 22, 2023, at the Pentagon in Washington.

Associated Press

Another day of frigid wind chills and brutal cold across much of the U.S.

By **CAROLYN THOMPSON, MATTHEW BROWN and VALERIE GONZALEZ**

Associated Press

BUFFALO, N.Y. (AP) — Brutally cold temperatures and dangerous wind chills stayed put across much of the U.S. Monday, promising the coldest temperatures ever for Iowa's presidential nominating contest, holding up travelers, and testing the mettle of NFL fans in Buffalo for a playoff game that was delayed a day by wind-whipped snow.

About 150 million Americans were under a wind chill warning or advisory for dangerous cold and wind, said Zack Taylor, a meteorologist with the National Weather Service in College Park, Maryland, as an Arctic air mass spilled south and eastward across the U.S. Sunday morning saw temperatures as low as minus 20 degrees Fahrenheit (minus 6.7 degree Celsius) to minus 40 F in northern and northeast Montana. Saco, Montana, dropped to minus 51 F (minus 26 C). Subzero lows reached as far south as Kansas, Missouri, Illinois and parts of Indiana, Taylor said.

About 150,000 U.S. homes and businesses were without power Monday, the bulk of them in Oregon after widespread outages that started Saturday. Portland General Electric warned



A jogger trots on a snow-covered road during a winter storm, Monday, Jan. 15, 2024, in Grand Prairie, Texas.

that strong winds forecast for Monday and threat of an ice storm Tuesday could delay restoration efforts.

The storm was blamed for at least four weekend deaths around Portland, including two people who died of suspected hypothermia. Another man was killed after a tree fell on his house and a woman died in a fire that spread from an open-flame stove after a tree fell onto an RV.

In Utah, where almost four feet (1.2 meters) of snow fell in the mountains over a 24-hour period, a snowmo-

biler was struck and killed Sunday night by a semi-trailer about 70 miles (113 kilometers) southeast of Salt Lake City, according to the Utah Highway Patrol. The person killed was among four snowmobilers attempting to cross U.S. Highway 40 in the Strawberry Reservoir area.

In Wyoming, a backcountry skier was killed after triggering a 50-foot (15-meter) wide avalanche. The victim was swept into a gully and through brush and trees, then remained buried for about fifteen minutes be-

fore being found by a companion in the mountains south of Alpine, Wyoming, on Sunday afternoon, according to the Bridger-Teton Avalanche Center. It marked the third U.S. avalanche fatality in recent days, following a Wednesday accident at a California ski resort that killed one person and injured three others, and another that killed a person on Thursday in the Idaho backcountry near the Montana border. Swirling snow and avalanche dangers prompted road closures Monday

across parts of Utah and Colorado. East of the resort community of Vail, Colorado, officials closed a 20-mile (32-kilometer) stretch of Interstate 70, the primary east-west highway through the state.

The Buffalo Bills renewed their call for shovelers at Highmark Stadium in Orchard Park, New York, on Monday morning to help dig out from more than a foot and a half of snow that fell through a blustery weekend that delivered the snow amid wind gusts of 60 mph (97 kph).

Crews had the turf cleared under a sunny sky by mid-morning while citizen shovelers who took them up on the offer to earn \$20 an hour worked in temperatures in the teens to clear seats for fans ahead of the 4:30 p.m. game.

At first glance it was a daunting task, Bob Isaacs of Buffalo acknowledged a few hours after arriving at 7:30 a.m. But he considered his work his contribution to the team.

"You got to remember you're a Bills fan. It's all part of the deal," he said.

Neighboring towns saw even higher snow totals, thanks to roving Lake Erie-fed snow bands: 41 inches in Hamburg and Angola and three feet (about 1 meter) in West Seneca, Blasdel and South Buffalo. □

Associated Press

Fake 911 report of fire at the White House triggers emergency response while Biden is at Camp David

By **ZEKE MILLER**

AP White House Correspondent

WASHINGTON (AP) — A fake 911 call that the White House was on fire sent emergency vehicles to the complex Monday morning, when President Joe Biden and his family were at Camp David.

Fire engines and other emergency vehicles responded to a report just after 7 a.m. that the White House was ablaze and a person was trapped inside, according to a person familiar with the matter. The person was not authorized to talk about the fake emergency call and spoke to The Associated Press on the condition of anonymity. Within minutes, District of Columbia Fire and Emergency Medical Services and U.S. Secret Service personnel determined that it was a false report and called off the response.

Someone who was reached at the callback number for the 911 report indicated they did not place it, the person said, indicating it was likely spoofed.

Biden is set to return to the White House on Monday afternoon after spending part of the weekend at the presidential retreat in Maryland and participating in a service event in Philadelphia to mark Martin Luther King Jr. Day. □



A firetruck is parked outside of the White House in Washington, Dec. 19, 2007.

Associated Press

Houthi rebels strike a U.S.-owned ship off the coast of Yemen in the Gulf of Aden, raising tensions

By JON GAMBRELL

Associated Press

JERUSALEM (AP) — Houthi rebels fired a missile, striking a U.S.-owned ship Monday just off the coast of Yemen in the Gulf of Aden, less than a day after they launched an anti-ship cruise missile toward an American destroyer in the Red Sea.

The attack on the Gibraltar Eagle, later claimed by the Houthis, further escalates tensions gripping the Red Sea after American-led strikes on the rebels. The Houthis' attacks have roiled global shipping, amid Israel's war with Hamas in the Gaza Strip, targeting a crucial corridor linking Asian and Mideast energy and cargo shipments to the Suez Canal onward to Europe.

The United Kingdom Maritime Trade Operations, which oversees Mideast waters, said Monday's attack happened some 110 miles (177 kilometers) southeast of Aden. It said the ship's captain reported that the "port side of vessel hit from above by a missile."

Private security firms Ambrey and Dryad Global told The Associated Press that the vessel was the Eagle Gibraltar, a Marshall Islands-flagged bulk carrier. The U.S. military's Central Command later acknowledged the strike.

"The ship has reported no injuries or significant damage and is continuing its journey," Central Command said.

Houthi military spokesman Brig. Gen. Yahya Saree claimed the attack in a recorded television address that aired Monday night.

"The Yemeni armed forces consider all American and British ships and warships participating in the aggression against our country as hostile targets," he said.

The vessel is owned by Eagle Bulk Shipping, a Stamford, Connecticut-based firm traded on the New York Stock Exchange. In a statement to the AP, the



The bulk carrier Gibraltar Eagle is seen off Kristiansand, Norway, June 29, 2023.

company acknowledged the strike and said it caused "limited damage to a cargo hold but (the ship) is stable and is heading out of the area."

"All seafarers onboard the vessel are confirmed to be uninjured," the firm said. "The vessel is carrying a cargo of steel products. Eagle Bulk management is in close contact with all relevant authorities concerning this matter."

Satellite-tracking data analyzed by the AP showed the Eagle Gibraltar had been bound for the Suez Canal, but rapidly turned around at the time of the attack.

Central Command said it detected a separate anti-ship ballistic missile launch toward the southern Red Sea on Monday, though it "failed in flight and impacted on land in Yemen."

The U.S. Maritime Administration, under the Transportation Department, also issued a warning Monday saying there continues to be "a high degree of risk to commercial vessels" traveling near Yemen.

"While the decision to transit remains at the discretion of individual vessels and

companies, it is recommended that U.S. flag and U.S.-owned commercial vessels" stay away from Yemen in the Red Sea and Gulf of Aden "until further notice," the advisory said.

Sunday's missile launch toward the American warship also marked the first U.S.-acknowledged fire by the Houthis since America and allied nations began strikes Friday on the rebels following weeks of assaults on shipping in the Red Sea. The Houthi fire in the direction of the USS Laboon, an Arleigh Burke-class destroyer operating in the southern reaches of the Red Sea, Central Command said.

The missile came from near Hodeida, a Red Sea port city long held by the Houthis, the U.S. said.

"An anti-ship cruise missile was fired from Iranian-backed Houthi militant areas of Yemen toward USS Laboon," Central Command said. "There were no injuries or damage reported."

The Houthis did not acknowledge that attack.

It wasn't presently clear whether the U.S. would retaliate for the latest at-

tacks, though President Joe Biden has said he "will not hesitate to direct further measures to protect our people and the free flow of international commerce as necessary."

The first day of U.S.-led strikes Friday hit 28 locations and struck more than 60 targets with cruise missiles and bombs launched by fighter jets, warships and a submarine. Sites hit included weapon depots, radars and command centers, including in remote mountain areas, the U.S. has said. The Houthis have yet to acknowledge how severe the damage was from the strikes, which they said killed five of their troops and wounded six others.

U.S. forces followed up with a strike Saturday on a Houthi radar site.

Since November, the rebels have repeatedly targeted ships in the Red Sea, saying they were avenging Israel's offensive in Gaza against Hamas. But they have frequently targeted vessels with tenuous or no clear links to Israel, imperiling shipping in a key route for global trade.

Even the leader of the Leb-

anese militant Hezbollah group, Hassan Nasrallah, obliquely referenced the widening Houthi attacks on ships in a speech Sunday, saying that "the sea has become a battlefield of missiles, drones and warships" and blaming the U.S. strikes for escalating maritime tensions.

"The most dangerous thing is what the Americans did in the Red Sea, (it) will harm the security of all maritime navigation," Nasrallah said. Though the Biden administration and its allies have tried to calm tensions in the Middle East for weeks and prevent any wider conflict, the strikes in the Red Sea threaten to ignite one.

It's also affecting shipping for the Middle East nation of Qatar, one of the world's top natural gas suppliers. Three liquid natural gas tankers that had recently loaded in Qatar and were bound for the Suez Canal remain idling off Oman, while another coming from Europe to Qatar remains off Saudi Arabia. QatarEnergy and government officials did not respond to a request for comment.

Saudi Arabia, which supports the Yemeni government-in-exile that the Houthis are fighting, sought to distance itself from the attacks on Houthi sites as it tries to maintain a delicate détente with Iran and a cease-fire it has in Yemen. The Saudi-led, U.S.-backed war in Yemen that began in 2015 has killed more than 150,000 people, including fighters and civilians, and created one of the world's worst humanitarian disasters, killing tens of thousands more.

The American military did not specifically say the fire targeted the Laboon, following a pattern by the U.S. since the Houthi attacks began. However, U.S. sailors have received combat ribbons for their actions in the Red Sea something handed out only to those who face active hostilities with an enemy force. □

Brazil's Rio de Janeiro state confronts flood damage after heavy rain kills at least 11

By **DIARLEI RODRIGUES** and **ELÉONORE HUGHES**

Associated Press

RIO DE JANEIRO (AP) —

Neighborhoods in Brazil's Rio de Janeiro state remained flooded Monday more than a day after torrential rains that killed at least 11 people.

The heavy downpour wreaked havoc over the weekend, flooding peoples' homes, a hospital, the metro line in the city of Rio de Janeiro and a main freeway section, Avenida Brasil.

Some people drowned and were killed in landslides, while at least three died after being electrocuted. Eight towns across the state remained at a "very high" risk of landslides and another 10 at "high" risk, according to civil defense officials. "We feel like animals. It's not normal to live like this," Heloisa Regina, 55, said as she surveyed her flooded bar and home in Duque de



Firefighters evacuate residents through a flooded street after deadly rainfall in Belford Roxo, Brazil, Monday, Jan. 15, 2024.

Associated Press

Caxias, a city to the north of Rio where more than 100 millimeters (3.9 feet) of rain fell in 24 hours.

Regina spent the night trying to sleep on a pool table,

wondering how she was going to pay to repair the damage to the bar she has owned for 30 years. "We've lost everything," she said. Residents waded through

waist-high water Monday to navigate streets in Duque de Caxias. Others climbed on roofs and called for help as helicopters flew overhead, according to video

footage from Brazil's Globo television network.

Firefighters were searching for a woman who disappeared after her car fell into the Botas River in Rio's northern Belford Roxo neighborhood.

Around 2,400 military personnel from Rio's fire brigade were mobilized over the weekend and used ambulances, boats, drones and aircraft to rescue residents and to monitor affected areas.

Authorities intervened in over 200 incidents due to the flooding across the state, according to a statement from Rio's civil defense. But some people accused authorities of negligence. "We are completely abandoned," Duque de Caxias resident Eliana Vieira Krauss, 54, charged. The nursing assistant said she had carried her 80-year-old disabled father-in-law to her sister-in-law's home herself. □

Nauru switches diplomatic recognition from Taiwan to China

By **TAIJING WU** and **KEN MORITSUGU**

Associated Press

TAIPEI, Taiwan (AP) —

The Pacific Island nation of Nauru said Monday that it is switching diplomatic recognition from Taiwan to China, a move that reduces the dwindling number of Taiwan's diplomatic allies to 12 around the world.

A statement from the government of Nauru said it was severing ties with Taiwan and seeking a resumption of relations with China. China claims self-governing Taiwan as its territory and has been peeling off the island's diplomatic allies, often with promises of development aid. It's a long-running competition between the two that has swung in China's favor in recent years.

"This policy change is a significant first step in moving forward with Nauru's development," the statement

said.

China said it welcomes Nauru's move to break its "so-called diplomatic ties" with Taiwan.

The decision to re-establish ties with China "once again

shows that the one-China principle is where global opinion trends and where the arc of history bends," a Foreign Ministry statement said. Nauru said in its statement that it would move

to the one-China principle, which holds that Taiwan is part of China and recognizes Beijing as the government of China. It differs from America's one-China policy, which recognizes Beijing as China's government but doesn't take a position on who rules Taiwan. The announcement was a blow to Taiwan as it took pride in elections held just two days ago, a show of democracy that would not be possible in China. President-elect Lai Ching-te, who will take office in May, has been described as a separatist by China. His Democratic Progressive Party supports maintaining the status quo, in which Taiwan has its own government and is not part of China.

China says Taiwan must come under its control at some point and has staged frequent military drills around the island to dem-

onstrate its determination. Taiwanese Deputy Foreign Minister Tien Chung-kwang accused China of purposefully timing the news to the recent election.

"China's intention is to attack the democracy and freedom that the Taiwanese people are proud of," Tien said at a news conference. Two retired U.S. officials praised Taiwan's democratic process in meetings Monday with President Tsai Ing-wen and other leaders. The Biden administration asked the former officials to visit "in their private capacity" since the U.S. does not have formal diplomatic ties with Taiwan.

The Nauru announcement caught Jarden Kephas, its ambassador to Taiwan, by surprise. "There's nothing that I have to say. It was announced by my government and I was told to pack up and go," he told the AP. □



From left, Nauru Ambassador Jarden Kephas, Tuvalu Ambassador Limasene Teatu, Taiwan Foreign Minister Joseph Wu, American Institute in Taiwan (AIT) director William Brent Christensen, Sandra Oudkirk, U.S. Senior Official for APEC and Deputy Assistant Secretary for Australia, New Zealand, and the Pacific Islands in the State Department's Bureau of East Asian & Pacific Affairs, and Marshall Islands Ambassador Neijon Rema Edwards shake hands together at the inaugural Pacific Islands Dialogue in Taipei, Taiwan, on Oct. 7, 2019.

Associated Press

Food culture in Aruba

(Oranjestad) - Like many other cultures, an important aspect of the Aruban cultural identity is our connection to food and food traditions. The local food traditions consist of a melting pot of different cultural and religious eating habits and dishes.

Breakfast, lunch and dinner

The routine of breakfast, lunch and dinner on the island is one that does not completely follow a European or American routine, despite the major influences from these parts of the world on our culture and way of living. When it comes to the three important meals of the day, most of the Aruban population follows a Latin-American influenced routine.

Breakfast

Breakfast in Aruba is quite simple: a cup of coffee or tea, some bread, and sometimes an egg. Sometimes, due to the need of a quick "to-go" breakfast, you may also find many snack trucks and cafes that sell sandwiches, pastechis (meat pie), arepas and empanadas early in the morning.

Main Meal

The main meal is typically eaten in most households around noon or in the afternoon. This can consist of meat, fish, and chicken—stewed or fried—with funchi (polenta) or rice with stewed vegetables. Often, fried or boiled plantain or pan bati (Aruban pancake) is included. Stews are a staple in Aruban cuisine and can be largely influenced by Latin-American and Latin/Afro-Caribbean Stews. Some of the more unique stews and soups from the ABC Islands* include sopi di bonchi cora (red kidney bean soup with pig tail), sopi mondongo (tripe soup), carni stoba (beef stew), comcomber stoba (West Indian gherkin stew) and much more.

Dinner Time

Dinner time can vary significantly from household to household. Unlike the U.S. or in Europe, dinner time typically does not consist of a whole (warm) meal. Instead, the evening "meal" can



typically consist of something lighter, like a sandwich, though it is not uncommon to see leftovers from the main meal reheated and eaten again. Tea and coffee are often also served with the evening snack.

(Religious) Holidays

Christmas is probably the biggest global holiday, and every culture has its own spin on what their Christmas cuisine entails. In Aruba, our Christmas cuisine is again largely based on Latin-American influences, most notably from Venezuela. Ayacas and the famous pan di ham* are two crucial holiday dishes, along with stuffed turkey, roasted glazed ham topped with pineapples, arroz con pollo (rice and chicken) and potato salad, among other items. Traditional drinks include ponche crema (Aruban eggnog), chuculati pinda (hot chocolate with peanut butter), and homemade fruit punch. Desserts include, bolo di pistachio (pistachio cake), bolo di cashupete (cashew cake), quesoillo (flan), bolo preto (dark fruit cake), drigidex (gingerbread), pan boyo (bread cake) and more.



Snacks and tasty delights

Besides meals and dishes that are eaten on the dinner table, Aruba also has a food tradition that includes snacks and other tasty delights that you may easily find around the island. These include, Saco*, basket, pastechi, kroket, deditos, Johnny cake and more. These snacks are usually sold at local snack trucks and cafes, often located on the side of the road. In the area of Tanki Leendert and Tanki flip, for example, there are many of these trucks parked on the side of the road and often open until late at night—offering tasty and filling snacks post night-life fun. □

*ABC Islands: Aruba, Bonaire and Curacao

*Pan di ham: Derived from the Venezuelan Pan de Jamon (rolled up bread with ham, raisins and olives)

*Saco: Saco literally means "bag". Saco contains fried potatoes, plantains, chicken (and ribs) and a Johnny cake, served in a paper bag.

Source: Voeding, voedingsgewoonten en gerechten op Aruba (Nutrition, Food Traditions and Dishes on Aruba) by Biblioteca Nacional Aruba



Free Sangria
WITH THIS COUPON
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Alto Vista chapel and its link to Aruba's origins

According to *Etnia Nativa*, in the 18th century most of the inhabitants of Aruba were indigenous who lived on the north coast, one of the largest communities lived in Alto Vista.

As they were very religious, they had a chief with the name of Antonio Silvester who guided them in the Christian life and it was he who decided to build a stone chapel with a roof of corn rods, which would serve as a place of prayer. In 1750 it was blessed by Father Algemesi who came from Coro-Venezuela and appointed Domingo Antonio Silvester as the island's first prosecutor in the name of the Spanish crown and Rome. In 1752 the prosecution passed into the hands of Antonio Silvester's son-in-law, Miguel Álvarez, who continued to guide the parishioners in their prayers.

According to the book, *The History of Alto Vista* by

R.H. Nooyen, it is not known when Domingo Antonio Silvester came to Aruba from Venezuela. The elders believe Antonio was a Spaniard. In 1780, father Joseph Antonio de la Vegal called Bernardino Silvester, one of Antonio's sons with his wife Anna Cathalina Tromp, "neighbors and naturals of the island Aruba" and thus they became natives.

At the end of the eighteenth century many inhabitants the island died as a result of the black fever epidemic and since people believed that the Alto Vista area was the most infected, they began to build their homes further south within the Noord area, so the town of Noord began to grow into a community till getting its own Church. However religious festivals continued to be celebrated at this sacred native place, with the custom of arriving in procession to Alto Vista.



Two-hundred years after the beautiful time of Alto Vista, people can no longer see much of the town of Alto

Vista from 1750. With a lot of work they found the old foundations of the Church of the Queen of the Holiest Rosary to build a new chapel on the same place. The entire surrounding area was empty and desolated, making it hard to imagine that Alto Vista was a town at all. A hundred years later, people can see the remains of around twenty houses, some made of stone and others of clay. Nowadays, only around six of these houses remain.

South of the chapel in the yard two graves can be ob-

served, there was the cemetery which father Pablo de Algemesi blessed. It is not certain, but it is believed that the two graves belong to Antonio Silvester and Miguel Alvares, according to Nooyen. About 50 meters near the chapel there are still the markings of an old house, where Antonio and Bernardino Silvester would have lived. About 200 meters from the chapel there is a water tank which the locals call Tanki Cacique. In the past this tank was closed. But mostly water was brought out from the Poz di Noord, a well dug in the sand.

The chapel can be viewed from basically any point in the north side, even from Paradera and Sero Plat. All the historical remains around the chapel provide us with an idea on how the old people of Alto Vista used to live. Don't miss the opportunity to visit a place of historical significance with a window to Aruba's past. □

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For a small island, Aruba sure has a lot of unique treasures. Among these, we have some subspecies of animals that are unique to our island. These have evolved to perfectly adapt to our desert climate and make Aruba their home. At the same time, they are part of what makes Aruba truly one of a kind.

Cascabel (rattlesnake, *Crotalus durissus unicolor*)

According to the Arikok National Park, Aruba knows two kinds of snakes, the Santanero and the Cascabel. The cascabel belongs to the rattlesnake family. The cascabel is the only venomous snake from Aruba. It has a length of 65cm to 100cm, and is about 4 to 5cm wide. Its color varies from light brown to grey-brown, and its underbelly is white. On its back there are marks that are a little darker, in the shape of diamonds.

Its reproduction is oviparous, meaning the offspring can hatch from their eggs just before, during or immediately after laying.

The cascabel lives mainly in the Arikok National Park. It likes to live in dark places, and is thus found hidden among the limestone rocks and under stones. As a defense mechanism, the cascabel uses its rattle as a warning, and it is not an aggressive animal.

The cascabel feeds on lizards, small mammals such as rats and mice. It paralyzes or kills its prey with its venom, which is injected through a bite. The enemies of the casca-

bel are donkeys, goats, humans and cars. Humans are the biggest enemy of the cascabel, as they kill them and destroy their habitat for urbanization.

Shoco (burrowing owl, *Athene cucularia arubensis*)

The shoco is a small bird which is seldom seen. They are active during the day but are more active later in the day and at night for hunting. These owls have very good night vision and very good hearing.

The shoco is the national symbol of Aruba.

The shoco has about 20cm of length, and the females are slightly heavier than the males. They are light brown in color, with many white spots. The belly of the Shoco is either white or light brown, and the shoco has striking yellow eyes. Its beak is yellow/green. Young owls do not have white spots and are lighter in color. The nest of the shoco is a burrow in the ground. If the shoco cannot find a burrow, it will dig one in soft soil. The shoco lays one or two eggs every other day until all the eggs are laid – a shoco can lay up to four eggs. The first owlets hatch after three to four weeks. The shoco owl takes care of the owlets for three months until they leave the nest. Only a few owlets survive.

The owls dig burrows in the ground with low grass vegetation. An owl can live up to nine years.

Its defense mechanism is simply to fly away or retreat to its burrows. They eat mostly insects, mice and

Unique fauna of Aruba

lizards, and the main threats to their survival are boas – an invasive species introduced by humans as pets – and humans through destruction of their habitat.

Prikichi (parakeet, *Aratinga pertinax*)

The Prikichi is the national bird of Aruba. On Aruba, Bonaire, and Curaçao, parakeets can be found, but each of the three islands has a different breed. The Yellow-shouldered Amazon parakeet that we have on Aruba is also found along the coast of Venezuela. Unfortunately, there is interbreeding between the breeds due to cage birds from, for example, Curaçao being released on Aruba. The parakeet population on Aruba is in danger due to extensive deforestation occurring on the island because of the growing population.

The prikichi weighs between 90 to 100 grams. It has a greenish-brown head with some yellow around the eye. The back and wings of the parakeet are dark green, and the underside of the body is a lighter shade of green. There is also a bit of blue in the wings. The parakeet's beak is gray/black.

Parakeets often use termite nests as breeding sites. Parakeets are found in all natural environments (mondi) of the island. It defends itself by flying away and loud cries. Parakeets eat seeds from the pods of the Kwihi tree, Divi Divi, and columnar cactus. They also consume natural fruits. Its main predators are boa constrictors, humans.

Conew (cottontail rabbit, *Sylvilagus floridanus nigronuchalis*)

The Eastern Cottontail rabbit (*Sylvilagus floridanus*) was probably brought over to the island by Indian settlers thousands of years ago as a source of food. This rabbit, locally known as Conew, has spread all over the island and has become part of our ecosystem. The very adaptable Conew can live in

a wide variety of habitats, including Aruba's xeric scrublands, where it typically grazes on weeds and grasses.

The Aruban Conew has a brownish grey color and a distinctive white belly. This white fur extends to the bottom of the tail which becomes visible as the rabbit runs. These rabbits can grow up to approximately 40 centimeters in length over their short lifespan of 3 years. Cottontail rabbits reach reproductive maturity when they are just 2 to 3 months old. A female rabbit, called a doe, finds a suitable nest spot under a shrub or rocks and lines it with fur. She can have an average of 3 to 4 litters per year averaging 5 young each. The doe only visits her young once or twice a day to nurse her babies for a period of 2 to 3 weeks. The young reach independence at 4 to 5 weeks.

The Aruban Conew is an endangered species and protected by Aruban law. The Conew is thought to have drastically declined due to an increase in human activities, habitat fragmentation and predation by the invasive Boa constrictor as well as feral cats and dogs. However, recently there seem to be more rabbit sightings in rural and wilderness areas and also in the National Park. This could be linked to a recent decline of the invasive Boa population after the long period of drought. As the Conew can reproduce very quickly, a short break in predation pressure can lead to a fast increase of rabbits. Sadly, the Boas are back on the rise again with the truly wet rainy seasons we have recently experienced. This could cause a new decline in the Conew population that was just starting to recover.

These are but a few of Aruba's beautiful inhabitant, which we must all contribute to protect. For more information, visit <https://www.arubanationalpark.org/main/flora-fauna/>



A brief history of the California Light House

(Oranjestad)—At the furthest western point of the island, there lies the tallest structure on the island: The California Light House. Standing on top of a limestone cliff, this lighthouse oversees the entire island, offering one of few best views of the island and the surrounding sea. It is also one of the few monuments that hold a rich history.

The lighthouse was constructed in between 1914-1916, and its first keeper was a young trained lighthouse keeper from Curacao names Jacob Jacobs. Mr. Frederico Fingal was the last man to have occupied this position until 1962. Though his son, Mr. Romulo Fingal did not continue in his father's footsteps, he does have a special connection to the lighthouse. He sat down with our reporter and shared a bit of its history.

As Mr. Fingal explains, "In 1915, cargo donkeys were hired from Figaroa di Noord to help build the Lighthouse at Westpunt. The donkeys had to walk along the beach all the way to Westpunt carrying the cargo, poles, cement, and all these things. At that time, it was a difficult task until Aruba got its first truck. These things reflect how people could have accomplished this tremendous job with so little." Mr. Fingal said, "At that time, it wasn't a place for people to work. It was very challenging because it was full of goats and donkeys, and it was very isolated. There were no hotels or roads to get there. There was only a donkey trail. Those were



the only means of transportation." Mr. Fingal continues, "In 1939, I was born in the lighthouse, and my father was the last lighthouse keeper until he retired in 1962. After that, they removed the power cables all the way to the top. According to the story, we couldn't have the light ourselves because they dismantled it, and after many years, I heard that it is in a train museum in San Nicolas, where we found this very special lens that, when the light shines through it, it reaches 30

kilometers out to sea." Mr. Fingal told our reporter.

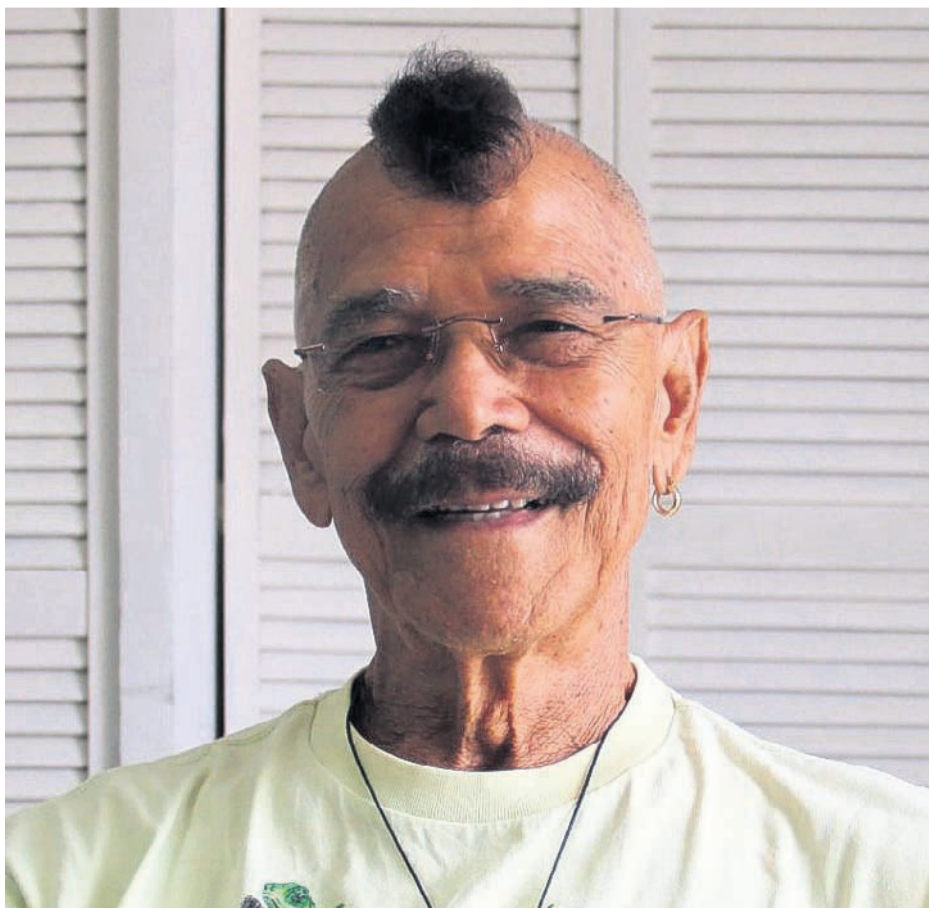
The lighthouse has a long and very interesting history. The reason why the lighthouse was built, according to Mr. Fingal, dates back to the day when the cargo ship S.S. California sank because of the lack of light. In 1913, Aruba made a request to Curacao to build a Lighthouse at Westpunt, and the governor of Curacao responded to Aruba to come back in 1915 with a well-detailed plan. "During the First World War from 1914 to 1918, they had to wait for the light to be transported to Aruba because it was manufactured in France. At that time, there was no electricity, and the light was very interesting because it rotated with a kerosene lamp that planes used; clean kerosene," Mr. Fingal said.

Mr. Fingal discovered something very interesting about the lighthouse after much research was documented in his book 'History of the Lighthouse at Westpunt.' He found many details: "I found out that the height of the lighthouse was due to the absence of electricity. There was also the presence of coral. There is a long steel cable from where the light is, and under the light, at the highest point, there is a hanging weight, a sort of pendulum that swings like that, with a weight that measures about 1 meter by 30 centimeters wide, which is a block of solid iron

attached to a cable. When you release it upwards, it comes down, and the weight that comes down pulls it up, gradually. And while it comes down, the same weight that is descending causes many small wheels to turn in the opposite direction. The Lighthouse rotates from 6 pm in the evening, when the sun sets, until 6 am in the morning. During the entire night, the light shines on the lantern, it goes down 24 meters, and the Lighthouse is 30 meters high. It is designed not to collapse," Mr. Fingal explains.

Mr. Fingal further explains that in one night, the lighthouse rotates 4,320 times and consumes one gallon of kerosene for the whole operation. "At that time, the kerosene was supplied from the Lago refinery. Every day it was brought down, and to start the light again, they had to lift the weight up, so our job as children was to crank it and raise the weight back up in the evening when the light stuck, they would take it down again, and the light stayed down. That's how it worked for a very long time," Mr. Fingal explains.

Thanks to the Monument Fund Aruba, which worked hard and is currently in charge of the Lighthouse, Mr. Fingal is very happy with its preservation, along with all the renovations that have taken place. He hopes that the story of the lighthouse will continue to live on for future generations. □



CROSSWORD

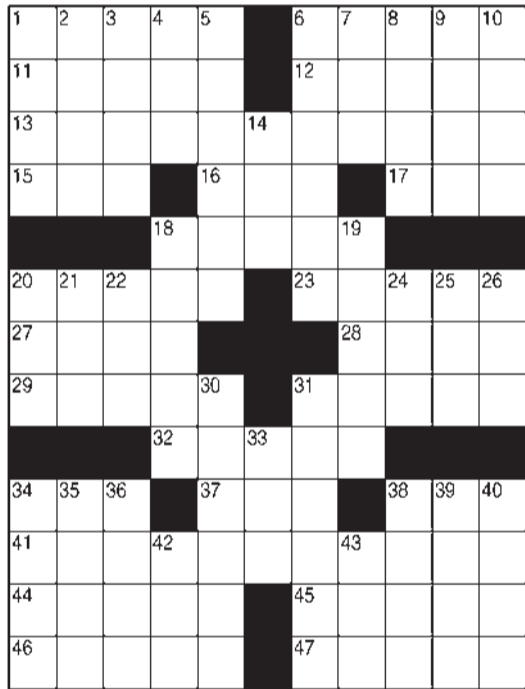
By THOMAS JOSEPH

- ACROSS**
- 45 Spooky
 - 1 Streaming, poetically
 - 6 Deli fixture
 - 11 River of France
 - 12 Carried
 - 13 Tony-winning musical of 1979
 - 15 Outdated
 - 16 Scot's cap
 - 17 Spring month
 - 18 Opera's Callas
 - 20 Fancy neckwear
 - 23 Tony-winning musical of 1980
 - 27 Scam
 - 28 Bullfight cries
 - 29 Tony-winning musical of 1977
 - 31 Pottery ovens
 - 32 Concluded
 - 34 Form 1040 org.
 - 37 Energy
 - 38 Peaks: Abbr.
 - 41 Tony-winning musical of 2009
 - 44 Figure of speech
- DOWN**
- 1 Too
 - 2 Poultry
 - 3 Told tales
 - 4 Mine rock
 - 5 Attacked
 - 6 Thwart
 - 7 Barracks bed
 - 8 Molecule component
 - 9 Pollux's mother
 - 10 Vortex
 - 14 Corn unit
 - 18 Pluck
 - 19 Stay away from
 - 20 "That's it!"
 - 21 Junior, to senior
 - 22 Paint buy
 - 24 Suffering
 - 25 Decimal base
 - 26 Braying beast
 - 30 Digestion aid
 - 31 Astronomer Johannes
 - 33 Game cube
 - 34 Wading bird
 - 35 Take the bus
 - 36 Glided
 - 38 Sorvino of "Mimic"
 - 39 Drudgery
 - 40 Goblet part
 - 42 Fireplace item
 - 43 Director Ang



Yesterday's answer

- 21 Junior, to senior
- 22 Paint buy
- 24 Suffering
- 25 Decimal base
- 26 Braying beast
- 30 Digestion aid
- 31 Astronomer Johannes
- 33 Game cube
- 34 Wading bird
- 35 Take the bus
- 36 Glided
- 38 Sorvino of "Mimic"
- 39 Drudgery
- 40 Goblet part
- 42 Fireplace item
- 43 Director Ang



1-16

AXYDLBAXR
is LONGFELLOW

One letter stands for another. In this sample, A is used for the three L's, X for the two O's, etc. Single letters, apostrophes, the length and formation of the words are all hints. Each day the code letters are different.

1-16

CRYPTOQUOTE

TPI FTUY ACUDB DOUYDOBY

DU OTY WTI UPIJDJCK APY WTI

WCFDKQ. — ECPK ESCIUCKK
Yesterday's Cryptoquote: I BLINK JANUARY'S LASHES AND GUSH DOWN DECEMBER'S CHEEKS. — SANOBHER KHAN

More CEOs fear their companies won't survive 10 years as AI and climate challenges grow, survey says



People reflected in a window of a hotel at the Davos Promenade with a slogan about AI alongside the World Economic Forum in Davos, Switzerland, Monday, Jan. 15, 2024.

Associated Press

By COURTNEY BONNELL
AP Business Writer

LONDON (AP) — More executives are feeling better about the global economy, but a growing number don't think their companies will survive the coming decade without a major overhaul because of pressure

from climate change and technology like artificial intelligence, according to a new survey of CEOs by one of the world's largest consulting firms, PwC. The survey of more than 4,700 CEOs worldwide was released Monday as business elites, political leaders

and activists descended on the World Economic Forum's annual meeting in Davos, Switzerland, and it showed a mixed picture of the coming years.

Of the executives, 38% were optimistic about the strength of the economy, up from 18% last year, when the world was mired in high inflation, weak growth, rising interest rates and more. The CEOs' expectation of economic decline has dropped to 45% from a record-high 73% last year, and fewer saw their company as highly exposed to the risk of geopolitical conflict, according to the PwC Global CEO Survey. That's despite wars in Ukraine and the Middle East, including disruptions to global trade from attacks by Yemen's Houthi rebels on commercial ships in the Red Sea. Even with the improved economic outlook, the challenge isn't close to over, with the World Bank saying last week that it expects the global economy would slow for a third consecutive year in 2024.

The executives, meanwhile, felt worse about the prospects for their companies' ability to weather big changes. The survey shows 45% of the respondents were worried that their businesses wouldn't be viable in a decade without reinvention, up from 39% last year. The CEOs say they're trying to make changes, but they are running up against regulation, a lack of skills among workers and more. "Whether it is accelerating the rollout of generative AI or building their business to address the challenges and opportunities of the climate transition, this is a year of transformation," Bob Moritz, global chairman of PwC, formerly known as PricewaterhouseCoopers, said in a statement.

Artificial intelligence was seen as both a way to streamline business operations and a weakness. □

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Still trying to make 'fetch' happen, now in song: 'Mean Girls' gets a musical update



This image released by Paramount Pictures shows Avantika, from left, Angourie Rice, Renee Rapp and Bebe Wood in a scene from "Mean Girls."

By JOCELYN NOVECK
AP National Writer

The first "Mean Girls," that compulsively watchable high-school based social satire by Tina Fey, came out in 2004. The Broadway musical opened in 2018. Now it's 2024, and we have a screen adaptation of the theater adaptation. How long will this reconfiguring go on? Is there a limit? Or ... does the limit not exist?

Forgive us that utterly blatant setup for one of the original's most famous lines. It's just that some of them are so darned memorable. Like, "You can't sit with us!" screeched. Or when Regina, the haughtiest queen bee ever to carry a cafeteria tray, scathingly tells her minion Gretchen, who's trying out her new word "fetch," to "Stop trying to make 'fetch' happen. It's NOT going to happen!!"

But even in "Mean Girls 17," should it come to that, someone will still be trying to make "fetch" happen. And it's actually not a bad word to describe the experience of watching the

new "Mean Girls" a slick, fizzy bit of entertainment that's occasionally delightful and usually fun, even if the translation to 2024 definitely has its rough spots.

If you've recently re-watched the first film, you may be surprised here at how many lines remain, word for word. What's impressive is how many still work — unlike some social comedies that felt right 20 years ago but have scenes that fall with a thud now (see "Love Actually").

There are exceptions, though. I'll confess to feeling queasy throughout about the "dumb girl" character who remains in the Plastics, Regina's social group. There is, thankfully, no more reference to a coach sleeping with a student, which would not have been funny, even with Jon Hamm as the coach. Slut-shaming has been conspicuously toned down — the insult in Regina's famous Burn Book is now "cow" and not "slut."

On the other hand, fat-shaming? That's still there, as when the camera zooms

in rudely on the rear end of a character who's gained a few pounds.

As for the casting, some of it works wonderfully, particularly the duo who introduce the film, which is again written by Fey, with music by Jeff Richmond (her husband), and lyrics by Nell Benjamin. Damian, the beloved character described affectionately by Janis as "almost too gay to function" (but that's only OK when she says it), and Janis, his best friend, a talented artist whose fallout with Regina left her in the dirt socially, function almost as quasi-narrators. Jaquel Spivey, of Broadway's "A Strange Loop," is hilarious and also moving as Damian you wait for each new line, and he wastes none of them. And Auli'i Cravalho as Janis has a gorgeous voice and charismatic screen presence. (And a huge song, though from the trailer, you wouldn't know anyone has songs at all.)

Angourie Rice is the new Cady, the Lindsay Lohan role, a home-schooled

math whiz who arrives in suburban Chicago straight from Kenya, where her mother was doing zoological research, into the snake pit of high school. Rice is a sweet presence but not as convincing in the "bad Cady" moments as Lohan. As for the Plastics, singer Renee Rapp, formerly Regina on Broadway, imbues the role with powerhouse vocals and an angrier edge than the excellent Rachel McAdams did when she's enraged, boy, you feel it. Once again, Cady begins her first school day in math class with Ms. Norbury, once played by Fey and again by Fey! Tim Meadows is also back as the principal; both look older but certainly not two decades. Cady has a rough entry and ends up eating lunch in a bathroom stall, but is rescued by Janis and Damian. In the cafeteria, she has her first encounter with Queen Bee Regina. "My name is Regina George," sings Rapp, in some of the show's best lyrics, "I am a massive deal. I don't care who you are, I don't care

how you feel."

The Plastics Regina, needy Gretchen (Bebe Woods) and intellectually challenged Karen (Avantika) adopt Cady and teach her the rules: Wear pink on Wednesdays. No tank tops two days in a row. A ponytail? Once a week. Also: You can't date someone's ex-boyfriend, because those are "the rules of feminism." At such moments, one can literally hear Fey writing the line. (Side note: Please come back to the Golden Globes, Tina, and bring Amy Poehler.) (Speaking of Poehler, she is missed as Regina's "cool" mom, but aptly replaced by Busy Philipps.)

Things go south quickly when Cady falls for Regina's ex, Aaron, who sits in front of her in AP Calculus (leading to the excellent lyric "Calcu-lust.") Regina isn't going to give up Aaron without a dirty fight. So Cady, aided by Damian and Janis, plots to bring Regina down from inside, pretending to be a loyal Plastic.

But at what point does Cady stop pretending and BECOME a Plastic? (Ask Janis.)

Directors Samantha Jayne and Arturo Perez Jr. keep the action moving briskly. A key visual difference is technology. In the 2004 film, friends spoke to each other on the telephone, in split screens. Now, of course, gossip and bullying take place via social media. In some ways this makes it all seem more vicious. When Regina takes an embarrassing tumble onstage at the Christmas performance, we witness a social media shaming that is much crueler than anything that happened in the 2004 version.

And yet, it's believable, of course. One comes away from this latest "Mean Girls" thinking that in some ways things may have gotten better for high schoolers than they were in 2004 but in other ways, things have only gotten meaner. □

Associated Press

Osaka's Grand Slam comeback ends in 1st-round loss to Garcia, Gauff advances at Australian Open

By JOHN PYE
AP Sports Writer
MELBOURNE, Australia
(AP) — Moments after her Grand Slam comeback ended in a first-round loss, Naomi Osaka walked back through the players' tunnel where her name has a prominent place among recent Australian Open champions.

Three matches into her return from 15 months off the tour, and six months after the birth of her daughter, Shai, Osaka lost 6-4, 7-6 (2) to 16th-seeded Caroline Garcia in a tight encounter at Rod Laver Arena on Monday night.

"The competitive in me is really frustrated that I'm not winning these matches, of course," Osaka told a post-match news conference. "So I wouldn't say, like, this comeback is how I thought because I'm delusional enough to think I could have won the tournament."

She smiled, before adding: "I think my delusion is what allows me to win the tournaments."

Osaka won the U.S. Open in 2018 and 2020, and the Australian title in 2019 and '21. This was the first time she lost in the first round in Melbourne, where she made her debut in 2016.



Naomi Osaka of Japan waves as she leaves Rod Laver Arena following her first round loss to Caroline Garcia of France at the Australian Open tennis championships at Melbourne Park, Melbourne, Australia, Monday, Jan. 15, 2024.

She took time out from tennis for her own wellbeing after first-round exits at the French Open and U.S. Open in 2022. She's not planning any more breaks for now.

"Yeah, I think I just have to keep living day by day and training hard and playing a lot more matches," she said.

"And hopefully my dreams will come true."

The big-serving Garcia didn't give Osaka a look at

a breakpoint in the match. Most of the rallies were short only three longer than nine shots. The bulk were less than four. Most of the service holds were comfortable except for Osaka's one dropped game in the first set. That was all the difference.

"I have a lot of respect for Naomi as a person and as a player 15 months she's been away," Garcia said. "I'm very glad to see her back.

Six months after giving birth, she's playing quite amazing already. We have to watch out."

Osaka was one of three past Australian Open champions who returned to play at Melbourne Park for the first time as moms, joining 2016 winner Angelique Kerber and 2018 champion Caroline Wozniacki.

The Australian Open started Sunday and will be played over 15 days for the first time, with the first round

spread over three days in a bid to cut down on the late-finishing matches.

Still, it was 1:39 a.m. local time by the time Felix Auger-Aliassime closed out a 4-hour, 59-minute win over 2020 U.S. Open winner Dominic Thiem that finished 6-3, 7-5, 6-7 (5), 5-7, 6-3. That match was briefly held up in the fourth set by a bird landing on the court at Margaret Court Arena and having to be chased off by a ball kid to laughter from the crowd. It then flew around the stadium briefly before play could continue.

For Auger-Aliassime, the win ended a run of first-round exits at three consecutive majors.

In the opening match on Rod Laver, U.S. Open champion Coco Gauff needed just 60 minutes to advance 6-3, 6-0 over Anna Karolina Schmiedlova.

The 19-year-old Gauff, who won her first major at the U.S. Open in September, said she had increased confidence in her serve thanks to some advice from Andy Roddick.

Fourth-seeded Gauff dropped just one point on her serve in the second set and credited Roddick, saying "he's probably one of the best servers in history." □

Associated Press

Sway Now: All-Star Swayman posts shutout, Bruins beat Devils 3-0

By JIMMY GOLEN
AP Sports Writer
BOSTON (AP) — All-Star Jeremy Swayman stopped 31 shots for his third shutout of the season, getting goals from David Pastrnak, Charlie Coyle and a diving empty-netter from Trent Frederic to give the Boston Bruins a 3-0 victory over the New Jersey Devils on Monday.

Coyle scored 30 seconds into the second period on a backhand, and Pastrnak made it 2-0 on a power play early in the third. Brad Marchand had a pair of assists, and Pastrnak also assisted on Coyle's goal to



Boston Bruins center Charlie Coyle, left, scores against New Jersey Devils goaltender Nico Daws (50) during the second period of an NHL hockey game, Monday, Jan. 15, 2024, in Boston.

Associated Press

give him 61 points on the season, third-most in the NHL.

Swayman improved to 2-0 since being announced as a selection through fan voting for the Feb. 3 All-Star Game in Toronto. Frederic's empty-netter came with 78 seconds left when he outdove a defender to tip the puck off the post and over the goal line.

Nico Daws made 33 saves for New Jersey.

The Bruins had played four straight overtime games, beating St. Louis on Saturday to snap a three-game losing streak in which they lost their hold on the NHL's

top record.

Boston appeared to take a 1-0 lead on a first-period power play when Marchand fed James van Riemsdyk in front, but a replay ruled that Pastrnak was off-sides entering the zone.

So it was still scoreless when the Bruins scored off the second-period faceoff, with Marchand backhanding it from the left boards to a streaking Coyle, who put a backhand of his own past Daws.

Pastrnak made it 2-0 three minutes into the third period on a one-timer off a cross-ice pass from Charlie McAvoy. □

After another playoff failure by Dallas, maybe a call to Belichick can save the Cowboys

By **ROB MAADDI**
AP Pro Football Writer

Jimmy Johnson showed more passion on television for winning than any of the Dallas Cowboys did on the field.

Now, Jerry Jones could turn to another coaching icon to save his franchise.

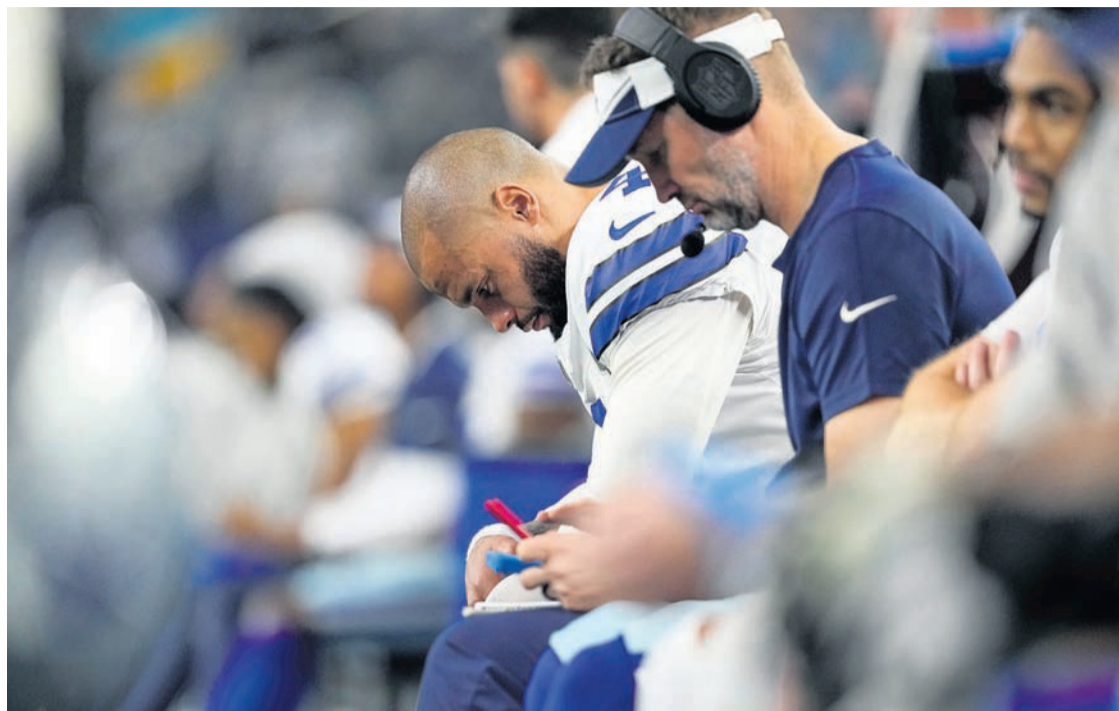
Speculation about Bill Belichick has ramped up. He already is the odds-on favorite to be the next coach in Dallas even though Mike McCarthy hasn't been fired.

After a dismal performance Sunday against Green Bay, that might be just a matter of time.

Dak Prescott, Micah Parsons and the rest of the NFC East champions didn't show up for a wild-card game against Green Bay. The Cowboys became the first No. 2 seed to lose to a No. 7 seed since the NFL went to a 14-team playoff format in 2020.

It wasn't even close. The Cowboys were embarrassed.

Jordan Love and the Packers destroyed Dan Quinn's defense, dominating Dallas



Dallas Cowboys quarterback Dak Prescott hangs his head while sitting on the bench during the second half of an NFL football game against the Green Bay Packers, Sunday, Jan. 14, 2024, in Arlington, Texas.

48-32 in a game they led 27-0 and 48-16.

The Cowboys lost at home for the first time since the 2022 season opener, ending a 16-game winning streak.

Jones has to be out of patience after his team's latest playoff failure. The 81-year-old owner looked

stunned and angry as he watched from his suite. He said this collapse "seems like the most painful" playoff loss he has endured.

"This is beyond my comprehension," Jones said.

The performance was far worse than the score indicated. The Cowboys came out flat and had little en-

ergy and no answers for Green Bay.

Johnson, the Hall of Fame coach who led Dallas to two Super Bowl titles in the mid-1990s and recently was inducted into the team's ring of honor, was fired up during the halftime show on Fox.

"You get your rear end in

there and you play the way you know how to play," a scowling Johnson shouted into the camera.

His message didn't reach the 'Boys.

They were just as uninspired in the second half as they were in the first. The garbage-time points at the end only made it seem less lopsided.

Under McCarthy, the Cowboys are the first team to win 12 games in the regular season for three straight years and not advance to the conference championship. The Super Bowl drought for America's Team will reach 29 years.

Jones has to be contemplating a change.

He has a talented roster that features four first-team All-Pro and five on the second team, including Prescott and Parsons.

But everyone crumbled under pressure against the Packers.

Prescott threw two interceptions, including a pick-6. Parsons had just one solo tackle and one quarterback hit, and the team had no sacks. □

Associated Press

Joel Embiid scores 41 points in return from knee injury. He leads 76ers past Rockets 124-115

By **DAN GELSTON**
AP Sports Writer

PHILADELPHIA (AP) — Joel Embiid returned from his latest injury to score 41 points

and grab 10 rebounds and lead the Philadelphia 76ers to a 124-115 victory over the Houston Rockets on Monday.

Embiid had his 16th straight 30-10 game. Tyrese Maxey added 27 points for the Sixers.

Alperen Sengun led the Rockets with 19 points. Dillon Brooks scored 18.

The 29-year-old Embiid missed the last three games with left knee inflammation (the 76ers went 1-2). He had played just two games this month after he missed all four games on the 76ers' holiday road trip. The Sixers are 3-7 this season without Embiid, the reigning NBA MVP and the two-time defending league scoring champion who entered Monday's matinee leading the NBA in scoring at 34.6 points.

Embiid's health is of course crucial to a Philadelphia

team hopeful of a deep postseason run.

His absences, though, have placed his candidacy for another MVP trophy on the rocks.

The new collective bargaining agreement requires players, in most instances, to play in 65 regular-season games to be eligible for awards such as MVP or the All-NBA teams. Embiid has met that threshold only twice, when he played a career-best 68 games in 2021-22, and 66 games last season.

He can miss only eight more games out of the final 44 before he is no longer eligible for MVP.

When healthy or, healthy enough Embiid makes the game look easy and makes

the Sixers look like contenders. If his knee still ached Monday, it didn't show in a 13-point first quarter. Embiid sure looked fine when he dropped another 13 in the second quarter.

Maxey and Tobias Harris hit consecutive 3s in the second quarter for a 42-23 lead, and when Embiid hit one just before halftime, he helped the Sixers take a 66-47 lead into the break.

Embiid has scored at least 30 points in 17 straight games.

He grabbed his 10th rebound in the fourth quarter and checked out for good with the Sixers up 114-94.

Embiid made 12 of 21 shots and 16 of 17 free throws. □



Philadelphia 76ers' Joel Embiid, left, tries to get past Houston Rockets' Jeff Green during the first half of an NBA basketball game, Monday, Jan. 15, 2024, in Philadelphia.

Associated Press